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If You're Planning to Can

A broadcast by Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Tuesday, April 22, 1941 in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, over stations associated with the NBC Blue network.

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WALLACE KADDERLY:

Here we are in Washington. Tuesday again, and time for our weekly report to homemakers on the research the Department of Agriculture carries on in home economics. And here's Ruth Van Deman again to do the reporting.

You know, Ruth, I imagine many of our Farm and Home friends would recognize your voice even if I didn't mention the name.....

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

I don't know about that, Wallace. But I'm sure many will find a familiar ring in what I have to say today about canning.

KADDERLY:

Canning time again. So it is. My, how the months do roll.

VAN DEMAN:

And all signs point to this being a big canning year, in farm homes anyway, where fruits and vegetables come straight from the garden.

KADDERLY:

Yes, I expect a good many farm families will take their cue from that announcement Secretary Wickard made the other day....the announcement about the increase in factory canned tomatoes.

VAN DEMAN:

What's it to be.....something like 15 million extra cases of tomatoes?

KADDERLY:

That's the plan now....a 50 percent increase over last year...to stock the nation's pantry ready for emergency calls from the Red Cross, for school lunches, relief, whatever the situation demands.

VAN DEMAN:

Well, what's good sense for the nation's pantry is generally good sense for the family pantry.

And I was interested that this call for more canned vegetables put tomatoes first.

KADDERLY:

I suppose that's because of their vitamin C or something.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, fresh or canned, tomatoes are outstanding for their C. And they have so much too in the way of color and flavor. Sometimes I wonder how our great grand-mothers ever planned meals without tomatoes.

(over)

KADDERLY:

I expect the army mess sergeants wonder that same thing too. Tomatoes are one of the vegetables I understand that have helped to revolutionize army rations, since the old days.

VAN DEMAN:

Added to all that, tomatoes are the easiest vegetable there is to can in the home kitchen. In fact, tomatoes are the only vegetable you can process safely in the boiling water bath.

KADDERLY:

Nobody needs a pressure cooker then to can tomatoes.

VAN DEMAN:

No, the higher-than-boiling temperature of the pressure cooker is distinctly bad for tomatoes. It's likely to shoot them all to pieces....over-cook them so much they lose a lot of their fresh tart flavor and their bright red color.

KADDERLY:

Too much heat's hard on the vitamin C as well, isn't it?

VAN DEMAN:

Any heat's hard on Vitamin C.....especially when it's heat combined with air.

Fortunately the acid in the tomato protects the vitamin C to some extent. And Nature's been very generous in the amount of vitamin C she put into the tomato to start with.

KADDERLY:

What's that slogan the canning specialists use....something about "2 hours from garden to can"? Is that designed to save vitamins?

VAN DEMAN:

Vitamins and everything else that's good. Speeding food from the fresh state to the preserved state is good insurance in several ways. It helps to get the jump on the bacteria that make foods spoil. And it keeps ahead of the enzymes that make it ripen....and over-ripen if they go too far.

KADDERLY:

When you come to putting the tomatoes into the cans, do you hot pack or cold pack them?

VAN DEMAN:

Either one. Some home canners set great store by having their tomatoes come out of the cans almost whole. Naturally to do that the tomatoes have to go into the cans whole. So minus skin and core the tomatoes are packed raw and cold into the containers. Tomato juice is added to fill, and salt to season. Then they're processed in the boiling water bath. Packed that way, it takes 45 minutes to process tomatoes in glass jars.

KADDERLY:

Isn't the time shorter for pints than quarts?

VAN DEMAN:

Po, pint and quart jars generally measure just about the same number of inches around. So it takes as long for the heat to penetrate to the center of the pint as the quart jar.

And as you know, it's only when the food in the jar is heated through and through for a long enough time that the bacteria are killed.

KADDERLY:

Bacteria seem to be a kind of fifth column the home canners are always fighting but never see.

VAN DEMAN:

Good. That's putting it into the language of the day all right.

And now, to finish answering your question about hot-packing tomatoes. That simply means heating them first in an open kettle. Then packing them boiling hot into the jars and putting them into the canner for a short process. Five minutes is all they need when packed hot, as against 45 minutes packed cold.

KADDERLY:

You've mentioned glass jars, but of course home canners sometimes use tin cans.

VAN DEMAN:

Oh yes, lots of farm families who do a great deal of canning, use tin cans. They call for a special sealer of course, but that's not hard to learn to operate.

KADDERLY:

Ruth, I've heard some rumors about a possible shortage of tin cans this summer, because the tin might be needed for defense purposes.

VAN DEMAN:

I'm glad you mentioned that. I checked that this morning with the Office of Production Management. They say the way things look now, there's no prospect of a shortage in the No. 2 and No. 3 size cans home canners use. In fact they don't foresee any immediate shortage in any containers for preserving food.

KADDERLY:

What about steam pressure outfits? Aren't a good many of them made of aluminum?

VAN DEMAN:

A great many, yes, And of course aluminum is on the critical priority list.

But the defense people feel quite certain that there'll be enough of the type of aluminum needed to supply the pressure canner manufacturers.

KADDERLY:

They probably look on the pressure canner as one of the tools for home defense.

VAN DEMAN:

I'm sure they do. Whatever means millions of quarts of good food stored away in millions of family pantries is a pretty important item in preparedness. And they know that if a family's going to can any vegetables besides tomatoes or any meats or poultry at all, it needs a steam pressure outfit to process those foods safely.

KADDERLY:

Isn't it a good idea for people to check up on their old canners too? Be sure the pressure gauges are registering all right....the petcocks working,-----the clamps, doing their job?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, that's springtime routine with careful canners. And they get a lot of help from the county home demonstration agents in these pressure-canner check ups.

If you're using a pressure canner, there's nothing more important than having it work right. If the gauge for instance, doesn't register accurately, there's no way of knowing whether the temperature inside the canner is hot enough to sterilize the food enough to make it keep.

KADDERLY:

Well, if I were planning to can this summer, I know something else I'd check on.

VAN DEMAN:

What's that?

KADDERLY:

I'd be sure I had a reliable time-temperature table to follow with every kind of food I tried to put up. I believe I'd nail your home canning bulletin to the kitchen cupboard, where I could consult it every time I turned around.

VAN DEMAN:

You'd be a wise canner, Wallace. Memory plays strange tricks sometimes. And good food's too precious this year to take chances with. I brought along this copy of the canning bulletin just in case you wanted to refresh the memories of our Farm and Home friends on the title.

KADDERLY:

Ad lib offer of "Home Canning of Fruits, Vegetables, and Meats."